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ABSTRACT

This monograph is intended to be a guide to the teacher of adult basic education (ABE) whose students include those with learning disabilities. An introductory chapter notes that participants with learning disabilities in ABE programs may or may not have received special educational services depending on whether they attended school before or after mandatory provision of such services. A chapter on legal definitions and implications discusses definitions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1973. A chapter on facts about learning disabilities lists common traits and sources of assessment information. The learning environment is addressed next and focuses on characteristics of a facilitative teacher for individuals with a learning disability. The following chapter considers classroom and teaching strategies and stresses the importance of trying various techniques, building the student's self-concept, utilizing instructional accommodations, utilizing educational software, teaching test-taking strategies, and using group activities. A chapter on counseling for ABE adults with a learning disability emphasizes the value of multimodal approaches which use numerous techniques and strategies. The final chapter, on transition plans, urges the incorporation of job seeking skills into the whole curriculum. Appendices list assessment instruments and national resources and contacts. (Contains 35 references.) (DB)

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Adults Who Have a Learning Disability:
A Guide for the ABE Instructor

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1995

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Introduction

Adults who enroll in adult basic education (ABE) or general educational development (GED) degree programs have special needs. Having made unsuccessful attempts before to attain a high school diploma, they may approach the classroom with anxiety and apprehension. Establishing an appropriately accepting and caring educational environment is an essential ingredient in motivating these adults to persist in attaining their goals.

Adults who have a learning disability may be among the learners who return to ABE programs; estimates of the number vary from state to state. Without factual information about the types of learning disabilities and about effective instructional strategies, teachers in adult education classes will find it difficult to plan instruction for students who have a cognitive disability.

The importance of considering the topic of cognitive (learning) disabilities for the ABE teacher is apparent when the prevalence of this neurological disorder is recognized. In 1989, Ryan and Price (1993) surveyed ABE state directors to discover their perceptions of current practices in the area of learning disabilities. When asked to estimate the percentage of their state's adult basic education enrollees who had a learning disability, directors' estimates ranged from 0-90%. In Mississippi, the estimate was 20% of all ABE participants, a substantial number of ABE enrollees (Ryan & Price, 1993).

Two distinct groups of individuals with a learning disability may be participants in an ABE program:

- adults who are older and who may have exited school prior to the passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (now updated and known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]), and
- adults who are younger and who may have been diagnosed with a learning disability after passage of the above legislation.

Responses by state directors (Ryan & Price, 1993) indicated that only 25% of the states had agreed on a definition of a learning disability for use in the ABE classrooms. Of those states, most used the P.L. 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) definition (see page 5 for definition). The majority of state directors also ranked teacher inservice training on the subject of learning disabilities as a high priority.

Adults who have a learning disability also need assistance to plan ahead for their entrance into the job market upon completion of their education. They need to know (1) how their specific learning disability may impact their needs in the work place, and (2) how to speak about the learning disability with an employer. The classroom teacher is a primary connection between a learner with a disability and preparation for the work force. Teachers can help learners most effectively when they are knowledgeable about the structure of the world of work in the next century and about the legislation that governs the interactions of society and people with disabilities.

This monograph is designed as a compendium of information for the ABE teacher to use as a preliminary guide as they serve adults who may have learning disabilities.

Legal Definitions and Implications

Individuals who have a learning disability experience problems in processing the information that enters the brain. A learning disability is a *neurological* disorder; therefore, it is considered to be permanent and non-curable. Adults who have a learning disability may not manifest as many of the characteristics as may be seen in younger people. Whatever their present age, individuals who have a learning disability have learned some coping strategies that curtail some of the effects of a learning disability.

The difficulties experienced in acquiring new information and using stored (learned) information often affect other parts of a person's life. People who have a learning disability may have difficulty in interpersonal relationships, work relationships, social situations, and in all educational settings. The strategies learned as a person matured can be channeled to be of use to the individual in the classroom. Strengthening the basic life skills necessary for social functioning can result in successful completion of educational goals through individualized learning/teaching plans.

There are some important concepts to grasp in recently passed statutes of the federal government. Definitions contained in both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) , and in Sections 502-504 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1973 are pertinent to the teacher or director of Adult Basic Education programs.

The ADA defines **disability** and other terms contained in that definition and stipulates societal and employment mandates. The IDEA contains the definition of **specific learning disability** used for people of all ages.

Sections 502-504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act require that facilities be accessible to people with disabilities and mandate that affirmative action plans be in place for hiring in businesses or institutions that receive federal funding. Both Sections 502-504 and the ADA include regulations that pertain to institutions of higher learning (community colleges), which are frequent sites for ABE programs.

The ADA prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment processes, transportation, public services, access to education, and telecommunications. The legislation applies to employers who have more than 15 employees. Its provisions cover individuals with most documented disabilities, but excludes people who are currently abusing addictive substances (alcohol and drugs).

DISABILITY (ADA):

1. An individual who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual;
2. An individual who has a record of such an impairment;
3. An individual regarded as having such an impairment.

"MAJOR LIFE ACTIVITY" includes such activities as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, **learning,** and working.

"SUBSTANTIALLY LIMITS" occurs if an individual is unable to perform a major life activity, or if the individual is significantly restricted in a major life activity when compared with the average person in the general population. A substantial limitation is determined by considering (a) the nature and severity of the impairment, (b) the duration or expected duration of the impairment, and (c) the permanent or long-term impact resulting from the impairment.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY (IDEA):

A specific learning disability (SLD) is "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimum brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not apply to children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage." These individuals are often of average or above average intelligence, but they have significant differences in the ways they process, retain, and learn information.

Four of the most common specific learning disabilities are likely to be found in the adult basic education classroom. The first type is ***dyslexia***, a difficulty with reading words. Another type is ***dyscalculia***, difficulty with mathematical functions. ***Dyspraxia*** is a difficulty with processing word patterns in and out of the brain; ***spelling dyspraxia***

is a common manifestation seen in the classroom. The fourth type is ***dysgraphia***, the inability to write words. Each type learning disability demands a separate set of instructional adaptations in the educational setting.

Individuals who have a learning disability share some characteristics although each learning disability is specific and individualized. The teacher who learns the facts about learning disabilities and who is aware of the most common traits can design effective instructional and counseling strategies to aid learners in the ABE class.

Facts about Learning Disabilities

An official diagnosis of a specific learning disability (SLD) must be provided by a team of specialists such as physicians, psychologists, and teachers. Learners who may be included are adults who perform at the 8.0 instructional level or below (Weisel, 1992), and learners who have been clinically diagnosed within the last three years by professionals (1973 Rehabilitation Act). Seven percent of all GED candidates, approximately 43,000 people, reported having a disability (Baldwin, 1991), with 1 in 5 reporting they had a specific learning disability (19%).

Not all reading difficulties can be attributed to having a learning disability (NICHCY, 1992). It is important, therefore, to try to eliminate other possible causes for the problem before referring a learner for a diagnostic evaluation. Other possible causes include emotional disabilities, mental disabilities, and impairments of vision or hearing. The teacher can plan for ruling out these problems by arranging for vision and hearing screenings for all ABE participants, and by referring to a counselor if another non-visible disability is suspected. Research in Kentucky, Ohio, and Nevada (Weisel, 1992) ascertained that of the adults enrolled in their ABE programs, 30% had limitations in visual functioning, 50% had a significant hearing loss, 40% exhibited weak auditory comprehension, and 50% experienced some degree of difficulty with integration of visual-motor abilities. Baldwin (1991) reported that 1 in 8 (13%) GED candidates with disabilities stated hearing loss as their disability, 2% reported deafness, and 9% reported a vision impairment.

Individuals may exhibit several of a wide variety of identified characteristics that may be indicators of a possible learning disability. This checklist approach cannot render a clinical appraisal, however, because the team of licensed professionals must use a "differential diagnosis" approach. A number of other possible disorders must be ruled out in order to determine the presence of an SLD. Several traits that occur simultaneously and over a period of time suggest the existence of a learning disability. The following list of traits associated with a learning disability highlights the wide range that may occur:

Impulsivity, difficulty completing tasks	Inattention, daydreaming, short attention span
Reading comprehension difficulty	Discrepancies or delays in speaking
Difficulty writing letters or words	Difficulty in reasoning
Hyperactivity, distractibility, anger outbursts	Uneven and unpredictable performance on examinations
Perceptual impairment	Low self-esteem
Motor disorders or coordination	Fear of failure, Anxiety
Low level of frustration tolerance, disorganization	Difficulty with social situations, frequent interruptions
Self-focused	Dislike of working in groups
Underachievement	Inappropriate social comments
Difficulty establishing friendships	Attention-seeking behaviors
Fighting or oppositional behaviors, excessive talking, mood swings	Inability to accept responsibility for actions
External locus of control, more immature than peers	Poor study habits, poor planning ability, uses "forgetting" as an excuse

The experienced team of diagnosticians will use a battery of assessment instruments, as well as observations and comments of other people in determining the exact nature and presence of a specific learning disability. This approach to diagnosis should result in an evaluation that is related to the individual's life experiences, career plans and age (NICHCY, 1992). Teachers can frequently acquire a prescription for the ways in which a learner can learn best.

The difficulty for most teachers is locating a source for the diagnosis. Private practitioners often expect a handsome fee for the extensive work needed to assess an individual. If that choice is prohibitive, some adults between the ages of 16 and 64 may qualify for services from Vocational Rehabilitation. Vocational Rehabilitation has specific criteria for inclusion in its provision of services; not everyone will meet those criteria. However, for people who do qualify, the psychological assessment necessary for establishing the presence of a learning disability will be provided.

Other agencies that sometimes provide information or assistance in the diagnostic process include: the public school system adult education programs, literacy councils, the Learning Disability Association in your area (in telephone book under the county), counseling centers, study skills centers at community colleges, high school guidance counselors, the Orton Dyslexia Society (see Appendix B), and special education programs at a university.

Currently, a number of researchers are attempting to develop and validate instruments to identify the existence of a learning disability prior to the traditional diagnosis process. If an ABE program decides to try one of the assessments available

from various publishers, the teacher and site supervisor should *review carefully* the reliability and validity information that should accompany any such instrument. An analysis of differing learning styles can assist the teacher in understanding the ways a person learns best. The teacher should use the methods identified as primary modalities in helping the adult with a learning disability in class, but the teacher should also be aware that information must be presented more than once and in more than one way for these individuals. (See Appendix A for assessment instrument suggestions).

In employing the techniques of a differential diagnosis, the team of experts will consider the primary reasons for the individual's non-success. Vision and hearing testing will be conducted. Permission to access school records may be obtained in order to rule out a previous diagnosis of mental retardation. Other factors listed as excluded in the IDEA definition will be investigated (working as a migrant, language difficulties for internationals, cultural differences, economic disadvantage). Intelligence and achievement testing may be conducted, such as the WAIS for young adults, the WISC-R and WISC III, the ASVAB or the Woodcock-Johnson. Mississippi utilizes the formula of 1 standard deviation discrepancy between an individually administered full scale IQ instrument and the standard score on an academic test to confirm the probability of a learning disability. The physician and psychometrist can also confirm the presence of either Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as a child. Evidence is mounting that suggests that parents of children with these two disorders also have the disorder. Patterns of difficulties in marriages,

relationships, jobs, education, and social situations can be seen in the parents and young adult or adult.

Effective counseling interventions and learning strategies will aid in the acquisition of new information and new skills for the learner. Establishing an environment conducive to learning is essential for all learners, but the adult who may have a learning disability will be noticeably more responsive to a well structured, but individually flexible approach to instruction.

The Learning Environment

The key to establishing a classroom that facilitates learning for an adult is adopting a particular philosophy of teaching. This philosophy views the classroom as "learning environment," in which the teacher serves as a **facilitator**, and in which the student and teacher are **partners** in learning. The approach is relevant for all adult learners, but it may be especially appropriate for individuals who have a learning disability.

As ABE teachers, what can we do for adults with a learning disability? We can:

-View adults as adults, whole person, in a context

-Adopt a stance as a facilitator of learning, rather than a "teacher"

-Provide support for learning by creating a climate for learning.

This will mean that each learner is seen as an individual who exists in a whole context. Adults who return to the classroom have many outside demands on their time and thoughts. Many of them are workers and parents who will have limited time to study outside class. A facilitator plans class assignments that challenge adults to seek their own learning, and guides adults toward accomplishing the goals they set. The facilitator of learning strives to establish an environment of warmth, acceptance, and caring. This atmosphere reduces psychological barriers to participating in educational activities, helping learners to feel comfortable and safe each day as they enter the class and assume the tasks designated by the teacher. The facilitator will encourage all learners

to display fairness, acceptance, and courtesy to one another. In this way the classroom will become a place in which each learner can express their opinions and can have positive successes without fearing they will be harassed or will not be accepted.

Characteristics of a facilitative teacher for individuals with a learning disability

Positive
Upbeat
Highly organized
Provide structured, predictable environment
Willing to "go the extra mile" to help individuals succeed
Uses praise and rewards liberally
A partner

The teacher as facilitator knows the principles of adult learning (Knowles, 1973) and plans individualized instruction for learners based on these principles:

1. Adults want practical, "how to" information to meet concrete, immediate needs.

2. Adults need sensitive, helpful feedback about their progress.

3. Adults are motivated to learn best when the material they are learning is relevant to life.

4. Adults come to ABE/GED classes with various agendas, from a desire to learn, to getting a GED, to a requirement for a job or promotion.

5. Adults come to class with a lot of life experience, and they like to use or share their previous learnings with others.

6. Adults learn at their own pace and expect the lesson plans to be individualized.

7. Adults expect to be treated as adults.

8. Adults need to feel psychologically safe in order to participate actively.

9. Adults need opportunities to self-evaluate their progress.

10. Adults need a learning environment that is physically and psychologically comfortable.

11. Adults will participate to the extent that the material is both interesting and useful.

To assess the status of your learning environment, you may want periodically to ask yourself the following questions to determine if learners are exposed to a classroom conducive to successful learning:

1. Do I create a climate that welcomes each new learner?
2. Would I feel welcome here if I were new to the class?
3. Does the classroom contain posters, pictures, books, and displays that make the environment interesting and inviting for an adult?
4. Is the classroom safe?
5. Are learners allowed to make fun of others?
6. What is my comfor level with the ethnic, racial, and gender groups in my class?
7. If I am uncomfortable with some groups of students, do I tend to overlook negative interactions among students?
8. Do I avoid using stories or jokes that might be offensive to some learners?
9. Do I take complaints and concerns of learners seriously, rather than ignoring them?
10. Do I show that I value the contributions of each individual?
11. Is the classroom accessible for a learner who has a physical disability?
12. Do I encourage acceptance and model courtesy and fairness among all learners?

Creating a positive learning environment requires a personal commitment to: (1) honest self-assessment of your progress toward becoming a facilitative teacher, (2) an awareness of the needs and problems of the individual adult learners, (3) obtaining more information and results of research to help you learn new teaching methods, (4) soliciting feedback to help you evaluate techniques and strategies that are having a positive or negative effect, (5) making adjustments to your class based on the feedback received, (6) taking action when a change is needed, and (7) continuing to put into practice the plans that have been most effective in helping the learners move toward goal accomplishment.

Classroom and Teaching Strategies

The teacher appears to be the key component that enables adult learners to feel successful in the classroom (Cooper, 1994; Walberg, 1988). Most successful instructors agree that the key to success is experimentation and trying various teaching/learning techniques until one finds strategies that work for a given individual (Cooper, 1994). Other factors listed by Walberg as encouragers of productivity in educational attainment include limited television viewing, peer groups, the classroom morale, the home environment, high quality methodology and curriculum, the amount of time devoted to study, self-concept, maturity, and ability. The teacher can increase learner motivation to complete their goals.

Research into time required for learning information has resulted in the division of class time into 3 observable segments:

1. allocated time---time designated by the teacher for specific work, e.g., math problems.
2. engaged time---the time the learner appears to be focusing on the specified task, e.g., math problems
3. productive time---the time spent on lessons appropriate to and adapted to the learner.

If the methodology or technique of instruction is not appropriate for the individual, Walberg stated that allocated and engaged time may be time wasted. Productive time is the segment during which the best learning occurs. The disruption in information processing that takes place in the brain of a person with a learning disability almost guarantees that it is better to plan for productive time with these learners, with other

times in which a different type activity is interspersed. Walberg stated that dramatic increases in achievement are possible with only one or two hours of additional effort daily.

Techniques used in the classroom should include group learning and projects, individual study, computer assisted instruction, oral practice, written assignments, reading books, viewing video tapes, playing group games, listening to audio tapes, and maintaining a list of words that serve as a personal reference. Allowing for self-pacing in using and mastering materials enhances the academic self-concept and encourages people to become independent learners.

Learning is life-long; encouraging learners to adopt this mindset will lead to benefits throughout life. Peer tutors (volunteers or paid aides) can be helpful, both as people modeling the significance of life-long learning and as educational guides. Asking questions is a skill that adults with a learning disability often lack; teachers and volunteers can help them learn to phrase questions in order to learn more.

A strong academic and personal self-concept can be built through building a success identity. Role playing helps learn or improve social skills, self-concept, interactional skills, and work skills. Providing on-going group and personal counseling and support help to maintain the self-concept. Knowing that their specific needs will be accommodated in a class environment can increase the level of perseverance in a learner. Some of the instructional accommodations that may be needed are:

Extended time on tests.
Tested in separate room or quiet area.

Taped textbooks (available from Recording for the Blind, The Anne T. MacDonald Center, 20 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540. Telephone: 609-452-0606).
Tutoring---Peers or volunteers.
Use a notetaker for learners who have difficulty listening and taking notes.
Use a scribe for learners who have difficulty writing but who can express themselves well orally.
Use a reader during test taking for learners who have difficulty reading questions.
Tape record lessons presented to the entire class or materials to be practiced at home.
Use computers with speech output to reinforce learning and to facilitate test taking.
Use computerized curriculum software that highlights words on the screen and speaks them.

Computer software products designed to benefit individuals with a learning disability are available on the market. There are five main types of educational software. The teacher should select the category that matches the skill or educational need of the learner. **Drill and practice** software provides content that is structured and focuses on practicing specific skills and sequences previously learned. **Tutorial** software consists of new concepts; the teacher may have to assist the learner and teach them how to use the software correctly. **Simulations** provide direct applications of information and skills and teach problem-solving skills. The learner is presented real-life situations in which they demonstrate mastery of content. The teacher will need to know the academic and physical abilities of the learner because this type software requires keyboarding skills and good physical coordination. **Games** are another type of software. They are usually timed competitions with the program. They may use drill and practice or problem-solving approaches, in which the learner collects points for each correct response. Adults and learners who are beginning may experience frustration with games. **Tools** may not have

specific content, but will help learners acquire skills needed in most jobs. Tools software provides a basis for writing, word processing, database management, file creation, music or graphics editing, drawing, and may help individuals improve organizational skills and memory skills.

Adults who have a learning disability experience disproportionately high levels of anxiety in the classroom. One of the primary aims of the teacher will be to reduce the anxiety by preparing the learning environment, by accommodating the SLD, and by attempting to reduce test anxiety. Some tips for taking a test to suggest to the adult with a learning disability include the following items:

- Relax through deep breathing.
- Scan the entire test, searching for the part that appears to be the easiest for you.
- Read each question or math problem carefully. Place a check mark beside the ones you think you know and a question mark by the ones you think you do not know. First, complete all items you are certain you know. Practice this procedure on worksheets prior to the test day.
- To remember the answers, visualize yourself looking for the answer in the book, or picture yourself hearing the teacher give the answer in class, or close your eyes and mentally write the answer.
- Go back to the questions you do not know. Try the methods listed above. If you cannot remember the answer:
  --eliminate the answers you know are wrong
  --deep breathe to relax, and write or circle the answer you feel is correct
  --look for the answer hidden in another question on the test

Effective classroom interventions result when the teacher isolates the cause of the learning difficulty, experiments with numerous solutions, and assists the learner to practice the solution that works until it replaces the earlier strategies. The chart below addresses two of the most common areas that must be adapted by the teacher (Cooper, 1994); several possible solutions are listed.

1. Provide a structured and predictable learning environment.	2.Modify the curriculum to benefit individual learners.
When making class rules, solicit the learners' input; display the rules. Provide a daily copy of their IEP with assignments highlighted. Announce changes in the usual schedule in advance, several times. Designate specific times for specific tasks. Arrange seating so that individuals with a learning disability have positive peer or role models, but implement this in such a way that no one feels singled out. Teach math, English, and other basic subjects in the morning hours. Schedule regular and frequent informal breaks based on individual needs. Use attention-getting strategies where needed (color coding).	Determine if the learner knows the alphabet. Determine if the learner knows the basic sounds of letters. Check for weak vocabulary knowledge (interferes with reading comprehension). Use computer assisted instruction. Alternate high and low interest activities and subjects for each learner. Increase the use of visual presentations, simplified. Teach study skills, time management, and organizational skills (color coding, separate notebooks for subjects, highlighting materials in books) Use visual reinforcers for auditory instruction. Teach how to employ mnemonic devices. Teach word decoding skills--reverse attack, suffixes, prefixes, root, comparisons, speaking the letters, environmental cues. Help learn the meanings of new words and use them daily. Have learners write every day--journals, notes to family and friends, class members, other assignments.

Table games, game boards, and teacher-made games can be adapted and used in the ABE classroom. Games such as *Career Explorers* are informative, career related, interesting for participants, and inter-relational. Forming groups to write poetry may encourage hesitant poets and can make the exercise more stimulating for all learners. Adult learners enjoy sharing their life experiences with others; writing in groups provides an avenue for multicultural exchanges also. Composing Haiku or Cinquain poems can involve the least motivated learners, especially when the teacher announces contemporary topics about which to write.

HAIKU ("high-coo") is a form of Japanese poetry composed by all ages and types of people. Customarily, people from Japan are expressive of their feelings only through the arts such as poetry. A Haiku poem consists of 3 lines; they usually refer to some part of nature. The first line is 5 syllables long; the second line contains 7 syllables; the third (final) line contains 5 syllables, for a total of 17 syllables. Two examples are provided:

Spring is almost here
Balloons against the blue sky
Green, green everywhere

Trees are colorful
They change color in the fall
Orange, yellow, red

CINQUAINS ("sin-canes") are non-rhyming poems, five lines in length. Their name derives from the anglicized form of the French word for *five*. Each line meets certain criteria:

Line 1---one word title, a noun
Line 2---2 words that describe the title (adjectives)
Line 3---3 action words about the title (verbs)
Line 4---4 feeling words about the title (nouns or adjectives)
Line 5---a noun synonym for the title

An example of a cinquain composed by several ABE teachers follows:

Perfume
Aromatic, expensive
Relaxes, stimulates, soothes
Attracting, confusing, refreshing, enjoyable
Fragrance

Composing these poems can be exhilarating for the class! Once the class learns the techniques, they will look forward to the times when poetry is assigned. Vocabulary and understanding of the parts of speech flow naturally from such tasks. The teacher who is willing to vary the schedule, include the arts in the curriculum, bombard students with information in different formats, and challenge the minds of adult learners will be rewarded with higher levels of motivation and achievement.

Counseling for ABE Adults with a Learning Disability

Counseling "interventions" are strategies that interrupt expected behaviors, often replacing them with more acceptable or more effective behaviors. The goal in an ABE class (Canaff & Hutto, 1995) is for the teacher to listen actively and with understanding to the learner, and to know the community resources well enough to make referrals to appropriate agencies. Counseling is a time-limited relationship in which a professional works with people who are experiencing difficulty coping with a current life situation.

The adult who has a learning disability will experience difficulties in other arenas of daily living throughout life. The ABE teacher who helps this adult connect with a competent counselor will be helping the adult establish for life a healthy approach to dealing with the effects of a learning disability.

The most helpful therapeutic approach for individuals with learning disabilities is a "multi-modal management" approach (Weisel, 1992). Multi-modal approaches use numerous techniques and strategies to assist adults who have a learning disability. Weisel (1992) suggested that adults need the following support systems:

1. The realization that counseling is for "normal" people
2. Behavior management that includes structure and praise for appropriate behavior.
3. Well planned, appropriate educational interventions
4. Education about, and an understanding of, learning disabilities
5. Medication, when indicated for control of hyperactivity or anxiety.

The ABE teacher may not be trained to use counseling skills or multi-modal techniques. Nevertheless, the teacher can be helpful if he or she becomes as knowledgeable as possible about Specific Learning Disability, Attention Deficit Disorder, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, conditions which sometimes occur concomitantly. The teacher can then be a resource to the learners. When the teacher has expended the effort to know the agencies and people in their community, they can connect learners to those sources of assistance. National agencies, hot lines, and support groups can also be suggested to the adult with a learning disability. (See Appendix B for some agencies).

The teacher can help the learner understand their disability and the ways it may affect their life, learning, and work behaviors. An individual with a learning disability will need to learn ways to communicate both their accommodation requirements and the coping skills they already have when they transition to other educational institutions, training, or into employment. Learning to "disclose" the disability is a major step for many people (Thompson & Hutto, 1992); the teacher can aid in the process of inculcating those skills. Coping skills learned throughout life can serve as positive job skills; the teacher can help an individual describe the benefits derived from coping skills in a workplace.

The adult who participates in learning in a caring environment will experience academic successes when the teacher plans lessons based on the skills as well as deficits of the learner. The building of a strong academic self-concept is often a slow process. Both the teacher and the learner might feel frustrated at times when little measurable

progress is made. However, learning is taking place, and perhaps more importantly, the adult learner whose teacher plans individually for them will be gaining self-confidence in their ability to learn---perhaps for the first time in many years. This self-confidence is a building block for future attempts to learn new material.

Adults who complete a GED or other educational goals will be better prepared to determine their own life choices. The basic skills for self-advocacy, self-determination, and acceptable social interactions can be incorporated into the personal identity of each ABE participant. The Lifeskills portion of each class day is one way to impart information in these areas; this segment of the day can also serve as a forum in which to utilize and practice the skills discussed in the sessions.

The ABE teacher's primary role in assisting the adult with a learning disability will be as a liaison to provide a list of referral sources in the community; to know contact persons and sometimes to make an initial contact; to provide emotional support for an individual and a family; to aid career development planning (Hutto & Thompson, 1995; Thompson & Hutto, 1993); and to provide an ecological individual assessment (NICHCY, 1992).

Ideally, counseling for adults with learning disabilities will be conducted by a licensed professional. Trained teachers in the Adult Basic Education classroom can provide interventions on a short-term basis. Of primary interest to the teacher is the development of **active listening skills** to encourage participants to speak openly about their concerns. Secondly, the teacher can maintain a list of professional counselors who would serve as **referral sources** for participants who desire further help in coping with

a disability. Thirdly, knowing the **legal rights** of persons who have disabilities will enable the teacher to provide appropriate guidance to persons who seek **accommodation** for their disability in either the educational or work force environment.

Appropriate Counseling Interventions

Active listening	Referrals
Support	Individualized planning and goal setting
Self-presentation skills	Career assessment and planning
Relationship building skills	Accept and use feedback
Communication skills development	Self-esteem development
Knowledge of the disability and civil rights	

Parental expectations and expressions of confidence have tremendous influence on the achievement of individuals who have a disability (Sisson & Babeo, 1990). Gilbride (1993) found that the overestimation by parents of the functional limitations of a disability can have a negative influence on the development of self-esteem and academic achievements of a person with a disability. Therefore, attempts to involve the parents of younger adult learners or other family members in the positive planning for learners who have a learning disability is to be encouraged. This involvement has been demonstrated to be effective in the academic progress of people with a learning disability. Parents are often a valuable resource in helping the teacher understand the effects of the learning disability and in planning strategies that assist the learner in compensating for the disability. Forming a team with parents/family member, teacher, and learner encourages growth in the learner in all realms of daily functioning. The intentional

observation of skills and deficits in more than one area can result in the faster achievement of ultimate goals.

The teacher should plan for conferences with parents/partners on a monthly basis. The support of family is an essential component in the motivation and successful completion of goals set by adult learners as well as by persons who have a disability (Kelley & Lambert, 1992). In addition, transition plans and services (next chapter) can be more easily implemented with the involvement of parents or significant family members.

Transition Plans

Planning for transition for students with a learning disability means looking proactively into the future. It means defining the services a student will need in the future while simultaneously addressing the student's need to learn how to do things in the immediate present. The IEP can serve as a tool to help people attain personal skill development goals, knowledge of and purchase of assistive technology, and compensatory strategies needed throughout life.

The term *transition services* has been defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as "A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation. Transition services are to be based on individual need and to take into account the student's preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community-based experiences, and the use of adult living objectives."

There are four basic transition skills (AHEAD, 1987) that individuals with a learning disability must acquire. These four fundamental skills will serve students well in a variety of adult situations throughout life:

- *the ability to assess themselves,* including their skills and abilities, and the needs associated with their disability;
- *awareness of the accommodations they need* because of their disability;

- *knowledge of their civil rights to these accommodations* through legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and
- the *self-advocacy skills* necessary to express their needs in the workplace, in educational institutions, and in community settings.

Transition into the work force is another point at which individuals with disabilities may require special assistance. One of the most important things a teacher can do is to model the appropriate way to speak about persons who have a disability. The ADA and other rehabilitation legislation mandate using the formula "person first, disability last" (i.e., student who has a learning disability) rather than using the disability as a descriptor (an LD student). This pattern places the emphasis on the person rather than on the disability. The teacher who establishes this pattern in the minds of all learners will furnish all learners in the class with a valuable attitudinal shift. Learners who have a learning disability can focus on their *abilities* rather than on the *dis*-ability.

The ABE teacher can prepare all adult learners for employment by incorporating job seeking skills into the curriculum and planned classroom activities. Acquiring job search skills is a learning process utilizing both individual and group practice. The development of a personal resume is one step in the process; practicing interview skills in a classroom context is another essential step (Thompson & Hutto, 1992).

The development of a resume may be a new idea for people in an ABE classroom. Although some people may have had difficulty filling out an application form

for a job, the application may be the only experience they have had with searching for a job. The teacher can include a unit on resumes to instill in learners the importance of each work experience they have had. In each job, a person learns skills that can be used in positions that follow. This is a concept that may not be readily grasped until the teacher connects it to the achievement of one's educational goals. Each block of new information learned constitutes a part of the foundation for the next blocks of new material. Each job skill acquired is part of the foundation for skills in the next job. The resume should reflect all the skills and experiences gained by the individual.

Learning how to dress, how to speak with the employer, and how to disclose the learning disability are all part of practicing for the job interview. Video tapes from the public library or a community college library can underline the significance of learning these skills. In helping an individual learn to describe the learning disability and the impact it may have on their work, the teacher can assist the learner in positive phrasing. The impression one wants to convey to the employer follows the basic formula of "Yes, I have this difficulty; *but* I have learned to overcome the effects of the disability in these ways (x.x.x.x.x.). The only accommodation I will need to do this job effectively is (x.x.x.x.)." Providing the employer with some ways accommodation can be made will reduce the fear that accommodation costs are high.

Some suggested accommodations for learners with a learning disability (Brown, 1990) are presented below. Any accommodation must be selected on an individual basis; there are several possible solutions to any problematic job situation that exists.

However, the suggestions may help an individual who is inexperienced in working with people with disabilities begin to generate ideas for learners.

1. On the job or in the classroom, if a learner has difficulty reading instructions: Assign a class member or co-worker to read to the person; place instructions on their voice mail; teacher/supervisor can give verbal instructions; use highlight pens to single out the most important parts of an assignment.
2. If a learner frequently makes errors in following directions: Give instructions in a quiet place, slowly and clearly; write down important instructions; have the learner take notes on directions or instructions for the teacher to review prior to beginning tasks; have the learner repeat instructions to the teacher.
3. If a learner often transposes numbers while working mathematical problems: Provide a calculator or talking calculator in the classroom; ask the learners to say the numbers out loud as they write them down, and touch each number to be certain they are correct.
4. If a learner has difficulty working in the classroom because of distractibility: Provide a quiet corner of the room for their desk work; avoid placement near windows or doors; occasionally move the learner to another vacant room or area to improve concentration; allow frequent breaks in the routine.
5. If a learner has frequent grammatical errors and misspelled words: Purchase a word processing program for the computer that has spell checking and grammar checking features; write out instructions for using the computer spell checker and grammar checker; assign an aide to write the papers and lessons for the learner;

take the time to explain the errors to the learner and help them see the letters individually in words they often misspell.

6. For learners who have problems with time management and meeting deadlines: Teach the learners to use a daily calendar; use a watch that beeps to remind a person to end or begin an assignment; teach them how to prioritize their work assignments; provide practice taking tests or completing other work under timed conditions. The skills of time management are especially important for learners who plan to take the GED test. The test sections must be completed in pre-set time allotments. Although accommodations are made for learners who seek them because of a learning disability, the ability to adjust one's time per section is essential.

Transition into the work force or to further education is an important connection for all learners. Specific skills necessary for the job search, preparing for an interview, filling out application forms, appropriate dress, and other information will be provided in similar monographs by the Adult Basic Education Model Project. These skills can be learned and practiced in the classroom. For the adult with a learning disability, the ABE teacher becomes a primary service provider for moving into the work force.

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Appendix A

Assessment Instruments

Assessment Instruments for Preliminary Screening for Learning Disabilities:

A learning styles inventory is helpful for identifying the preferred learning modalities for *all* adult learners. It also helps identify the weaker modalities of people who have a learning disability; these are areas in which educators should provide activities to strengthen the skills of people who have a learning disability.

Learning Styles Inventory

Educational Activities, Inc.
P.O. Box 392
Freeport, NY 11520
1-800-645-3739 or 516-223-4666

For the computer diskette (3.5)--DK28090 E3B---$98.00.

A specific learning disability must be diagnosed by a team of qualified psychometrists, educators, teachers, physicians, and others involved in the life of an individual. The following instrument purports to identify learning disabilities. Programs that choose to use this or any other instrument should read carefully the validity and reliability information from the publishers.

Analytic Learning Disability Assessment (ALDA)

Slosson Educational Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 280
East Aurora, NY 14052-0280
1-800-828-4800
FAX: 1-800-655-3840

ALDA complete kit: Order #ALDA 1 S----$129.00.

Appendix B

National Resources and Contacts

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)
1101 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 429-5131

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
P. O. Box 21192
Columbus, OH 43221
(614) 488-4972
(614) 488-1174 (Fax)

Career College Association (CCA)
750 First Street, NE, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20002-4242
(202) 336-6749
(202) 336-6828 (Fax)

Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD)
P. O. Box 40303
Overland Park, KS 66204
(913) 492-8755
(913) 492-2546 (Fax)

Division of Adult Education and Literacy Clearinghouse
U. S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational & Adult Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 205-9996

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090
(614) 292-4353
(800) 848-4815

General Educational Development Testing Service (GEDTS)
Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials
American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 939-9490 or (800) 626-9433
(202) 775-8578 (Fax)

Learning Disability Association of America, Inc. (LDA)
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
(412) 341-1515
(412) 344-0224 (Fax)

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)
5795 Widewaters Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13214
(315) 445-8000
(315) 445-8006 (Fax)

Menninger Center for Learning Disabilities
Topeka Literacy Council
Box 829
Topeka, KS 66601-0829
(913) 273-7500
(913) 232-6524 (Fax)

National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center
(National ALLD Center)
Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20009-1202
(202) 884-8185
(202) 884-8422 (Fax)

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN)
P. O. Box 716
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
(610) 525-8336
(610) 525-8337 (Fax)

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
381 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016
(212) 545-7510
(212) 545-9665 (Fax)

National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL)
University of Pennsylvania
3910 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 91904-3111
(215) 898-2100
(215) 898-9804 (Fax)

National Clearinghouse on ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)
Center for Applied Linguistics
1118 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC
(202) 429-9292

National Network of Learning Disabled Adults (NNLDA)
808 N. 82nd Street
Suite F2
Scottsdale, AZ 85257
(602) 941-5112

Appendix C

Bibliography of Resources

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